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ABSTRACT

This guide contains information helpful to an extension agent preparing nutrition aides for their visits with low income homemakers. It describes important attitudes and the reasons for them in families with whom the aides will work; and suggests ways to create feelings of trust and respect between aides and family members, and techniques aides can use to set the stage for and improve their teaching. The main emphasis is placed on motivating homemakers to want to improve family living practices. Some of the topics discussed are: helping homemakers feed their families better, overcome loneliness, build self esteem, and gain confidence in themselves; and gaining homemakers' confidence and trust. Reports are included of seven home visits, with suggestions for role playing. This guide supplements PA-681, Training Home Economics Program Assistants to Work with Low Income Families. (AC 002 619). (PT)

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HUMAN RELATIONS
in Training Aides
-A Guide for Extension Agents

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HUMAN RELATIONS IN TRAINING AIDES

-- A Guide for Extension Agents

By Edward V. Pope, Human Development and Human Relations Specialist

This material is designed to help you train and advise aides. It emphasizes motivation, that is, helping homemakers want to improve their family living practices. It attempts to:

- Describe some important attitudes and the reasons for these attitudes in many families with whom aides will work.
- Suggest ways to create feelings of trust and respect between aides and family members.
- Suggest techniques aides can use to set the stage for and improve their teaching.

The information here supplements PA-681, Training Home Economics Program Assistants to Work With Low Income Families, and PA-680, Handbook for Home Economics Program Assistants.

This guide may serve to refresh your thinking about important human relations aspects of working with families. Use it when appropriate for training purposes or as background for yourself in counseling with aides.

During the course of training, you may want to reproduce parts of this guide to give your aides. Recommended for this purpose are the sections titled: Your Job As an Extension Nutrition Aide, Trust and Respect, and Helping Homemakers Gain Confidence. Near the end of training you may want to hand out How Are You Doing? as a "test" aides can answer for themselves.

There may be other sections of this guide that you would like to adapt as handouts for aides. Always feel free to change the length, format, or wording of any of these materials, to fit your local conditions. In both your writing and counseling, choose words and expressions that are simple, direct, and where possible in the idiom of the aides.

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One reminder: knowledge is never complete. While the studies upon which this information is based are reliable and valid for the groups and samples studied, it must not be assumed that all poor families share all the named characteristics or possess them in the same degree. Nor do disadvantaged families have a corner on the qualities ascribed to them in the studies. Many families in more fortunate circumstances are characterized by, for example, loneliness, insecurity, belief in fatalistic philosophies, or occasional cruelty to children. Poor families, as far as we know, are simply more likely to possess the characteristics found in the studies.

It may be wise at appropriate times during training to explain this to aides so that they will not think that poor families are being singled out for undue criticism or unfair judgment.

Your training should help aides appreciate that to a large extent circumstances create attitudes and behavior. Low-income families, because of the special situations they face, are likely to feel and act in the ways described in this material.

On the positive side, it is to our advantage to know the tendencies of certain people to behave in their own characteristic ways. Such knowledge gives leads concerning how to teach a particular audience most effectively.

You are the one best able to devise your own methods for using the material with the aides. Your choice of method will depend partly on whether you use individual conferences, group meetings, newsletters, or other activities. As you know, aides usually enjoy and learn well in role-playing situations. There are some suggestions for this at various points in the text.

We advise caution with regard to competitive activities. Agents have at times encouraged aides to compete with one another. Some agents have learned the hard way that aides who are not highly self-confident find competition difficult to take.

What About the Aide Who Needs Help With Her Own Feelings?

Regularly scheduled group and individual conferences are a must in supervision.

At times, though, when the aide's own feelings about situations that she meets worry or disturb her, she needs to feel free even at odd hours to talk them over with you personally. How often new understanding and new ideas come to people when they talk things out with a good listener! One of the important roles the aide plays in her work is to be a reassuring and encouraging listener. From time to time, though, even the best listeners need the help of other listeners whom they can trust, as they themselves are trusted. They need to share their ideas, joys and frustrations with others who are understanding and helpful and will keep confidences. Aides will find they can go back to their work with new energy and more ideas to try.

When you feel the aide has a problem too difficult for you to cope with alone, do not hesitate to consult a qualified and trusted advisor or counselor. If one is not available in your community, make every effort to obtain the needed guidance from or through your supervisor or your Extension family life specialist.

THE EXTENSION NUTRITION AIDE AND HER JOB

The following section, titled Your Job As an Extension Nutrition Aide, has two purposes:

1. To assist you in describing for new aides the Expanded Nutrition Program and the important role aides play in its success; and

2. To serve as a "text to depart from" should you decide to adapt or reproduce it as a handout for aides to keep.

Your Job As an Extension Nutrition Aide

You have a very important part to play as a teacher and helper in a nationwide effort to raise the quality of nutrition of families.

Millions of people in our country are poorly fed and undernourished. Many children cannot keep up with their studies in school because they are hungry. Their younger brothers and sisters who are not yet in school are not getting the proper food to nourish their minds and bodies. When they are old enough to start school, this shows up. Many are not able to think clearly or to keep up with their schoolmates in other ways.

Teenagers and adults, especially older people, also suffer from improper and unbalanced diets. Often they eat bulky and sugary foods, and lack vitamins and other needed nutrition. As a result, many get sick easily. They find it hard to keep their jobs.

They greatly need the information you will bring them.

The program you work in is run by your local government, your State Land Grant University or College, and the United States Department of Agriculture. Your Extension Service agent is your supervisor. She will train you for your work, and talk over problems with you as they come up. Your agent will also help you see the progress families make from your teaching.

You will probably work mostly with mothers. The mother is often the only adult in the home and she has the most to say about what her family eats. In a few families you might teach older daughters or other family members. It is a good idea to work with fathers whenever you can. In some families you will need the father's approval before you start work with the mother.

Families in this country and around the world have many different kinds of food habits and feelings about food. This is also true for the families you will work with.

When you visit families it may be hard for you to understand habits and likes and dislikes that are different from the ones your family is used to.

For example, here are some important differences you might find:

1. Not all families like the same kinds of foods. Families that move to another part of the country may not be used to the new kinds of food they find

there. This might also be true for families that move to the city from farms. But even in the same place you will find differences.

2. In all families there are personal likes and dislikes for different foods. There are also different food needs because of age, illness, pregnancy, job or some other reason.

3. Some people like to eat twice a day, others three or four times. In other words, families have different meal schedules.

4. Some families are used to eating together. They have a habit of being together at mealtimes.

5. Other families almost never eat together. There may be many reasons why, like these:

   - people in the family might get up at different times
   - members of the family may go without some meals
   - family members may eat on the job or away from home for some other reason
   - the family might not have a place for everyone to eat at the same time

- there are not enough dishes or chairs for all the family
- the family doesn't enjoy being together at mealtimes
- the adults have never been in families where everyone eats together
- there might not be enough food to go around

Many homemakers cannot easily control what their families eat. Some who are discouraged by years of poverty, and by other heavy burdens do not even seem to care. But most want the best possible for their families. They do the best they can with what they know and what they have to work with. Our job and yours is to help them <u>want</u> to improve their families' food habits, and to teach them <u>how</u> to make better use of what they have.

You will probably find some families easier to work with than others. Problems in some families are very hard to cope with. But you will have many questions about how to work best with all the families you have. Your supervising agent will be glad to help you think of things to do. Talk with her about the pleasure you feel when you see signs of progress in a family. Talk with her, too, about the things that puzzle or sometimes discourage you. Two heads are better than one! You will feel better and get new energy and new ideas to try.

Remember your main job is to teach nutrition. Sometimes a

homemaker might not know what you mean if you say, "I am here to help you." She might think you are going to do all her housework for her. So be very clear when you explain your job.

Once in a while you might need to pitch in and help with some other problem before the homemaker is ready to learn about food. But always keep in mind your main purpose--to help families improve their meals so they will be more healthy.

You and thousands of other aides like you all over the country will help the Nutrition program succeed in helping homemakers feed their families better.

THE TIME THAT COUNTS IS "RIGHT NOW, TODAY"

It is very hard for low income families to plan for the future. Their money usually comes from welfare or public assistance. Some family members may have jobs, but at low wages, which are often not enough to support the family. It is not possible for low-income people to save much money. It often takes every bit of their cash, strength, and skill to make it through a single day. Many have no cash at all. Many are chronically ill. The "here and now" is what counts.

This is even more true for families who have been in poverty for a long time, maybe for generations. Their long struggle to eke out an existence day by day makes them look at life in terms of "today." "What I have now", not "what I will have tomorrow", or "next week", or "next year", is uppermost in their minds.

This is one reason why some people forget future appointments, or occasionally do not show up for work, or do not seem to plan for the future. It is also one of the reasons why so many children from disadvantaged families have a hard time in school and become dropouts.

Maybe you will find these characteristics among some of the aides. You probably do not approve of such attitudes and ways of acting. But you can understand that if you had a life like theirs, you would probably feel and act the same way.

What Does This Mean to the Aide as a Teacher?

Most people learn best when they see quick results. This is especially true for poor people, because they have very little to plan with for the future. This is why aides begin by teaching homemakers how to prepare quick meals, or cookies, or simple sewing or cleaning techniques, that can be finished in a short time.

It is also important for an aide to choose wisely the skills she will teach the homemaker at the very first. These should be things the whole family will enjoy and appreciate.

Aides may get upset when homemakers forget appointments, or have not planned ahead to have things done on time. Aides who have

overcome their own previous tendencies to act in such ways, sometimes forget how hard they had to work to change their own habits. You may have to find ways to help them remember the difficulties they had and the time it took them to change so they will not expect too much too soon from homemakers. Role-playing may help here.

Ways Aides Can Help Homemakers Look to the Future

An aide can help the homemaker plan ahead. She can:

- Talk with her about when the next visit will be
- Show her the date on a calendar
- Leave the calendar with her if she doesn't have one
- Ask her to cross out each day as it passes between the present visit and the next
- Check with the homemaker on the next visit to see how the plan worked

In such a way the homemaker will get used to expecting the aide's visits and will look forward to them. She may even plan surprises for the aide.

Urge the aide to notice differences in appearance of the mother, the children, the house or the yard and to express pleasure and praise for improvements.

Discuss with aides other ways to help homemakers plan ahead. Lead the aides to draw on their own experiences for ideas.

HELPING HOMEMAKERS OVERCOME LONELINESS

The loneliness many low-income homemakers feel comes largely from the isolation and rejection they have experienced in the community. Community life, in the country and in the city, has not paid much constructive attention to the disadvantaged until recently. In too many places poor people have been afforded, through welfare and public assistance, only the barest necessities of life. Even this is often done unwillingly and in punitive ways.

Poor families usually live in separate, run down and undesirable parts of the city, town or countryside. Public services, medical care, transportation and sanitation are often at a minimum, and sometimes lacking entirely. Many families have long histories of such isolation. It is easy to see why they feel left out and forgotten by the larger society.

When people live under such conditions they are likely to have deep feelings of suspicion and distrust toward "strangers." They have little confidence in people or programs promising to bring them something "for their own good." They have seen such people and programs come and go in the past, too often leaving them no better off than they were before.

This is not to say people do not usually accept what is offered. Many have learned to do so, however, with mixed feelings. While there is often, but not necessarily, gratitude for help, this appreciation is sometimes clouded by doubt as to the quality of motive - the "real reason" - underlying the program. People on the receiving end also often learn to question any program's constancy of concern for their ongoing constructive development as persons.

Many protect themselves, therefore, from further disappointment and frustration by building a wall of suspicion or skepticism between themselves and the outside world. This suspicion sometimes infects even family relations and friendships. They do not want to be hurt any more. One price paid for this self-made protection is loneliness.

There are some things aides can do to help homemakers who are lonely. The main thing is to be a companion as well as a teacher.

An aide can:

- Mix warm and friendly conversation into working visits. It is wise for the aide to avoid talking about her own family or herself unless the mother asks. Then the aide will need to be careful not to seem "uppity" or "superior." Perhaps one way she can do this is by admitting, when it seems appropriate, that she has quite a few problems she is trying to solve too. In other words, build into the relationship a human oneness and equality. (Try role-playing this, showing "right" and "wrong" ways and discuss the merits of different approaches.)

- Go with a homemaker to the store, or to the clinic when a child is sick.

- Arrange for her to take her children to a nearby community center, school, or library she has never visited. Make it easy, comfortable and fun. The aide might go with her.

- Help a homemaker learn about places to go for help. (Aides will need to learn the resources of the community, or refer families to you when advisable.)

- Arrange for her to go to places she has not seen before.

- Help her meet another homemaker.

- Start a small group of mothers, maybe only two or three, who would meet in each other's homes for lessons. The aide might need to bring extra working materials for these meetings. Maybe she could take the group shopping.

- Bring magazines with plenty of brightly colored pictures and leave them for the children.

- Encourage the homemaker to look at the pictures and to talk about them with the children after you leave.

- Encourage mothers to talk to children whenever they can about many things, including everyday happenings around the house. Help them see how important this is to the child's development of a sense of self and his ability to understand and use words. Urge them to use the child's name when talking with him.

- Find occasions to laugh <u>with</u> the homemaker - for example, when the aide goofs or when something really funny happens that both can enjoy. The aide needs to be careful never to seem to laugh <u>at</u> the homemaker.

- Help the homemaker feel the aide enjoys doing things with her, and that it's not just a job.

You might discuss with aides other ways they can help homemakers relieve feelings of loneliness.

FEELINGS OF INSECURITY

Many people who have been in poverty a long time become used to failure and to the almost constant frustration of not having things work out for them. When needs and desires are practically never satisfied, it is difficult to build self-esteem. Not much in the lives of disadvantaged people gives rise to a feeling of pride in either themselves or their families.

Repeated failure makes people afraid to try new ways of solving their problems. They resist new ideas because they are unsure of themselves; they suffer from deep seated feelings of insecurity.

All of us experience our share of insecurity. We sometimes doubt, for example, that we can tackle successfully the jobs we have to do. The more difficult the job seems, the more insecure we might feel. Most of us, however, can remember many times in the past when we have solved tough problems. Our memories of past trials and at least an average rate of success give us courage to try a new hard job even though we don't know for sure how it will come out.

But the memories of many poor people are full of trial and failure, not trial and success. Their recollections do not lead them to feel they want to try again. This means that the homemakers with whom aides work need many chances for quick success. Then they will believe, "I can do it," and build courage to keep on trying.

How People Act When They Are Insecure

Perhaps we need to think a little longer about ways people act when they feel insecure because of long lives of failure. Remember that they probably

- are unsure of themselves
- are afraid to try new ideas
- how low opinions of themselves

Remember also that we all have insecure feelings sometimes. But they are not habits with us all the time. It is just that the lives of disadvantaged people force many to feel insecure in spite of their own wishes.

There is a principle of human behavior here. It has to do with what is called "reinforcement of attitude." The more often a person finds that certain of his actions bring about specific results -- in this instance, failure -- the more he becomes "reinforced" in his feeling that such results are unavoidable. He feels sure he can predict what will happen whenever he tries such actions. Moreover, the more strongly he feels that the results are bound to be as he predicts, the more he is likely to act in a way which guarantees to bring them about. This process is what creates habits of feeling and behavior.

Not all habits, of course, involve unhappy experiences like failure and its anticipation. People also have habits of confident expectation of success; of pleasant anticipation of happy times. Some, however, are caught up in a well of insecurity and habits of behavior based upon unsure feelings.

People show insecurity, usually, in either of two ways. The first is to take their feelings out on others in displaced anger and hostility. The second is to find ways to escape from their responsibilities. Aides will probably encounter both kinds of behavior in their work. (Again, who does not act in these ways occasionally? The seriousness of these types of behavior is a matter of their frequency, duration, and intensity -- taken together.)

Taking Anger Out on Others - Some of those who take their feelings out on others might be quick to show anger at the slightest excuse. Others will keep it bottled up inside until it suddenly bursts out in ways that are sometimes violent and beyond their control.

For example, a mother might be constantly impatient with her children. She will bawl them out or whack them for every minor annoyance or disobedience. Another mother will keep her patience longer, but finally will reach the end of the fuse and blow her top. She might then lose control of herself completely and be very harsh or even cruel to her children or others in the home.

The wisest course is not to interfere with the mother's "discipline." When she loses her "cool," it is difficult to know

whether her actions come from covered up feelings of fear and insecurity, or whether her anger is well justified and used to good effect. In either case she can't help it right then.

The only sure way to encourage an insecure homemaker to even think about different ways of treating her children and other people is to help her overcome her insecurity. This happens gradually as she gains courage to take risks on new ways of doing things. When she discovers they work, she feels good inside. She can say, "I did it, and it worked!" An aide can help by becoming her friend while teaching her to do things she will be proud of.

Lasting changes in behavior and attitudes do not happen in a short time. The homemaker's feelings of fear and frustration probably have a long history. They have become habits in her way of looking at things, and habits are hard to change.

An aide might at some time see a home where children or other members of the family suffer from severe cruelty or neglect. The aide should report this to you immediately so you can take steps necessary for proper referral.

Escaping Responsibilities - We mentioned "neglect." This is another word for escaping responsibilities or running away from problems. For example, a mother who has been very discouraged for a long time might not do anything at all to keep herself presentable, her house in order, her family fed, or her home together. She will have no real interest in herself or her family. She might become lazy. This is her way of escaping responsibilities that seem too much for her. Other mothers will find different ways to hide from their family duties.

You might discuss with an aide or a group of aides the various ways people behave in order to escape responsibility. This may help in recognizing real "neglect" and distinguishing it from a sincere but hard-to-see desire to improve family living under extreme conditions.

(You may wish to reproduce the following section as a guide for your aides.)

TRUST AND RESPECT

You know it is important for a homemaker to believe you respect her. You know she also wants you to be a person she can trust. Then she will feel good about having you visit and be eager to learn from you.

Let's start by seeing what "trust" and "respect" mean. Then we will know we are talking about the same things.

Trust

Trust means having deep confidence in someone. You believe that the person you trust:

- cares about you, about what you do, how you feel, and what happens to you
- knows pretty well how you feel and why you act as you do
- knows most of the time how to help you lift yourself up when you are down or discouraged
- will keep on caring and trying to understand, no matter what you do or say

- thinks carefully about how to help you be your best self
- will not say unkind or untrue things about you behind your back
- will not talk to others without your permission about personal things you tell.

Most of all, the persons you trust help you trust in yourself because you feel safe when they are around.

Respect

Respect for people means that you believe in their personal dignity. You believe:

- they have the right to decide for themselves what they will or will not do
- each wants to be the best person he can be
- they are doing at any time the best they can with what they have.

It means that you give them honest credit and praise for their strengths. But you do not expect more of them than they can do at any time.

It means that you always try to give the best knowledge and help you have so they can make wise decisions by themselves.

It means most of all that you believe they are persons with the right to be themselves, and the right to be helped by other people when they need and want help. In other words, you honor their pride.

How Important are Trust and Respect?

Here is an example of how important trust and respect are. Let's say you visit a home where the eating or housekeeping habits are very different from what you are used to. It may be hard for you to understand a mother who lets herself and her family live in such disorder and filth. You might sometimes be shocked by what you see, and by the fact that the mother couldn't care less about her responsibilities.

So you might be tempted to criticize. You might let some critical words pop out, or look down your nose at something, or sniff with disgust, or show your disapproval in some other way.

But this will not make it easy for the homemaker to trust you. It will not make her feel sure that you care about her and want to help her. She will feel more like accepting your help when you show her you understand the problems she has and when you respect her for doing the best she can right now with what she has.

How Can You Help A Homemaker Believe She Can Trust You and That You Respect Her Dignity?

If we only had a magic formula! Our jobs would be so much easier. But there is no pill or prescription we can take to make us into trusting, respectful people.

Then what can we do?

We can learn a lot by watching people who have these qualities, and by thinking about what they do. We all know some people who understand and are concerned with others and their problems in helpful ways. They can inspire people to open up and talk about themselves. They can help others think through problems more clearly. They can help them choose ways to make life easier and happier. They are trusting and respectful.

How do they operate? What kinds of things do they do?

1. First of all, trusting and respectful people "make a climate" where other people feel free to be themselves.

Let's think about the words "make a climate."

We know that in nature each plant grows best in the climate where it can get what it needs. It is the same with people.

A plant needs the right soil, the right amount of water and sunlight and enough protection so it can live and grow. These things go to make up the plant's climate.

A person needs food, clothing and shelter as part of his "climate."

But people need more than just material things. They also need food for the spirit. They need:

- to feel wanted
- to feel they amount to something
- to feel they belong to something bigger than they are
- to feel accepted for what they are
- to feel people believe they can grow to be better persons
- to have satisfying social experiences.

So we say that one thing trusting and respectful people do is "make a climate" where others feel accepted for what they are and free to grow because they know they are believed in.

It's hard to explain just how these trusting and respectful people make this climate. It seems to come more from what they <u>are inside</u> than from any special things they do <u>on the outside</u>.

Another way of saying this is that they believe in the dignity and worth of others. It shows in what they say and how they act. Other people feel the full strength that comes when someone believes in them.

Still another way to say it is, "They are courteous." This is different from just having "good manners." People can be unkind in a "good mannered" way. People can also be courteous without polished manners.

A courteous person will never, for example,

- raise a laugh at the expense of another who can't defend himself
- hold up for ridicule the ignorance of another
- use sneers or sarcastic remarks to show his superiority.

A courteous person recognizes the desire of other people to be accepted for what they are. It's difficult, as we said before, to explain just how this gets done.

But we can say this "climate" is one where people feel it is all right to be themselves. They are not afraid they will be criticized, or laughed at, or told they don't know anything, or that they don't amount to much. They feel free to learn and grow.

2. Trusting, respectful people put the wants and needs of the other person ahead of their own.

For example, let's say you are a nutrition aide making a first visit to Mrs. H., a homemaker. You introduce yourself and describe your job and why you are there.

Mrs. H. hears you out and then says, "The thing is, I get the food stamps and they help a lot but I still don't have enough money to get all the food we have to have."

How should you answer Mrs. H. so she will know you are thinking about her problems first?

Here the aide may want to talk about meal planning and other methods of stretching the food dollar.

3. Trusting, respectful people always try to understand how things look to the other person.

When someone talks about his problems they try to put themselves in his shoes and let him know they understand how he feels. Maybe they can't understand completely because they are not that other person. But they can use their own experiences to imagine how he feels about the spot he is in. And they are able to let the other person know for sure they understand.

In your work with families you will often use your own experiences as a homemaker to help you build this kind of understanding.

Try always to see through the homemaker's eyes. Hers is the view of the family you will need to understand most. With practice you will find it easier to pick up clues. You will learn to see and hear more from her point of view.

There are two things you can do to make it easier to see things as the other person does:

- First, hide your feelings when what you see and hear and are asked to do disturbs you a little.
- Try always to take off the "blindfolds" that get in the way of understanding how things look to another person.

We all have some "blindfolds." They come usually from two sources:

One source is the way we were brought up to think and act. Usually, we believe the way we were raised is the right way. We feel strongly about our ways of thinking and acting. This is only natural because our ways usually work out for us pretty well in our daily lives.

We often don't know how strong our feelings are until we talk with somebody who has different ideas. Or when we see someone act in a manner that shocks us because we think it is so "wrong." Until we can take account of how another person was brought up to think and act we have a "blindfold" on.

Another source of "blindfolds" is what happened to us during our lives. Everyone has dreams and ideas about what he would like to make of his life. Some people have more chances than others to make their dreams come true. Some take advantage of these chances and others don't. Usually for those that don't something has happened along the way to stop them. Maybe they made an unwise choice, or they tried and failed and got discouraged. There could be lots of reasons.

If we know someone never had much of a chance to make anything of his life, we are pretty easily moved to help him.

But if he has had many chances and has still not done much for himself we have a harder time feeling he is a worthwhile person we should try to help. Maybe we feel there is no good reason for anyone not taking advantage of opportunities that come along.

But this is not the way he sees it. For him there are what he thinks and feels are "good" reasons. We have to put aside for awhile our own feelings and understand what has happened to make him feel this way. Otherwise we have another "blindfold" on.

4. Trusting, respectful people believe others do the best they can at any time with what they know and what they have.

This means that you will want to be careful not to jump in right off with all the answers. A homemaker will appreciate your showing respect for her dignity - her right to be herself - and her right to test you and take her time before she decides whether she wants your help.

It means also that the family, especially the homemaker, will look to you for many kinds of advice and help as they learn to trust you. You will have many chances to use your own knowledge and skill in homemaking to help the mother and her family.

They will probably ask you sometimes about problems you can't help them with. Here is where it's important for you to know of other places where the family can get help. Your supervising

agent will be able to advise you where to send a family for this special help. She will also be, when it is necessary, the "connector" between the family and, say, the Welfare or the Health Department. It will usually work best if you go to your supervising agent first for advice when a family has a special problem.

There is another important way you can show a homemaker that you believe she is doing her best. Find something you can sincerely praise on every visit to her home. It may be a spot of color in the room, a potted plant, a garden, or the twinkle in a child's eye.

We have talked about four ways trusting and respectful people treat others. They are:

1. "Making a climate" where people are free to be themselves.
2. Putting the wants and needs of others ahead of their own.
3. Understanding how things look to the other person.
4. Believing others do the best they can with what they have.

Think about the people you trust and who you feel respect you. Do they act in these ways toward you? How do you feel when they do? If you were one of your homemakers wouldn't you like an aide to act this way?

BUILDING SELF ESTEEM

Helping People Believe They Can Manage Their Own Lives

People in poverty often believe their lives are in the hands of fate. They feel they must simply accept what happens to them, without trying to change things. Homemakers sometimes talk of "good luck" and "bad luck" as though they have a strong faith in some kind of magic. They think luck or fate is more powerful than their own effort.

We can understand why this is so when we realize how little power many families feel they have over what happens to them. The "government" is far away and impossible for a poor person to influence. The "welfare" is often an impersonal thing. Its rules and benefits change in ways poor people cannot predict or control. The forces of authority, like the police, the sheriff, the judge and the school, often seem to poor people as though they are against them and not for them. The religion of some people leads them to endure suffering in this life in order to earn rewards in the hereafter.

Many leaders are trying hard to help people take advantage of job training, public housing, and programs like Extension's nutrition education. This task is not easy. It takes time and skill to give those who believe in "fate" enough confidence in themselves to try to change their lives for the better. Aides will face the same difficulties such leaders have.

How Aides Can Help Homemakers Gain Self Confidence

What can an aide do to help a homemaker believe in herself, feel more secure, and have enough energy to try new ideas?

1. Be a friend and a teacher.

The most important thing aides can do for homemakers who are afraid, lonely, and insecure is to be both a skillful teacher and a dependable friend. Sometimes this may mean the aide will act as a "mother" for a while to the homemaker. You can help aides if you understand this and warn them not to be surprised if a homemaker seems to depend on them too much.

2. Help the homemaker finish her "growing up."

Many women have married or borne children before they had a chance to complete their own growing up. They need to depend on someone they trust to help them become mature adults. Their own relatives and friends sometimes give valuable help in learning to cope with problems but the aide's caring, her praise, her help, her encouragement, and even her just being there will further help such homemakers feel they are worth something to somebody.

A homemaker who becomes like a "daughter" to the aide, however, obviously needs to make more and more decisions for herself if she is to overcome her dependence. This independence will not be easy for the aide to teach. The aide might be the first person the homemaker has ever found who really cares enough about her to help her. She might cling in a way that is a little frightening for the aide because she doesn't know exactly how to get out of it. If this happens, encourage the aide to trust her own good sense to find ways to "wean" the homemaker in easy stages. The homemaker needs the kind of nourishing help that will teach her to depend on herself more and more.

Possible ways of "weaning":

- address the homemaker as "Mrs. _____" rather than by her first name
- gradually stretch the time between visits
- leave a job for the homemaker to finish by herself
- give alternatives and have the homemaker choose before continuing work
- urge the homemaker to go to places by herself
- help her make friends near by
- do not do things for the homemaker that she can do for herself, like making appointments, providing unnecessary transportation, etc.

3. Help the homemaker be proud of her appearance.

With many homemakers, especially younger ones, "the best way to a woman's heart is through her appearance." Help in personal grooming or in choosing more colorful and attractive clothing may be just the spark a woman needs to begin freeing herself from her fear of unimportance. After she builds up a "bank account" of self respect and confidence she can afford to "draw out" some of her new strength and "spend" it to benefit her family. This works both ways. As a homemaker develops good feelings about herself, she will want to improve her appearance. You can help aides here through role-playing, perhaps, to be alert to "teachable moments."

4. Help the homemaker manage money and make choices.

A homemaker might feel she has harder problems "right now" than, say, nutrition. The aide may have to start by helping her cope with money and budget problems. Perhaps the homemaker has too little money left over to buy food after she pays for rent, children's clothes, medical bills, time payments, insurance, etc. She will need help to see how she can juggle her money so she has enough to spend on food. Only then will she be able to think about "better buys" and more nutritious meals.

Several principles here could be adapted for role-playing:

- Various ways of "weaning"
- How people feel and act when they are insecure.
- "The best way to a woman's heart is through her appearance."
- Where can the aide start to work when a family has many problems?

(You may want to reproduce this page for your aides.)

Helping Homemakers Gain Confidence

How aides can help build the homemaker's confidence in herself:

1. Encourage the homemaker to repeat the steps she is shown how to do.

2. Praise successes, however small they appear.

3. Praise her for trying, even though she cannot do all the steps, or she makes a mistake. Encourage her to believe she can learn by trying again.

4. Help her to learn by taking small steps.

5. Reassure her if she becomes discouraged. An aide needs to be careful not to go too fast in her teaching. If an aide gets the feeling that the homemaker has had enough for one day or that other things are on her mind, the aide can praise her for getting this far, and promise to come back to it next time. If the homemaker wants to talk instead of work, an aide might put the work aside and listen. She should respond in encouraging ways that will help the homemaker think well of herself. (While it is good to be a listener and to visit, remember to move on to teaching, too.)

6. Close every working visit in a friendly and warm way.

7. Remember there is no such thing as a stupid question.

8. Review what progress has been made.

A homemaker will be more confident when the aide acts in these ways. She will gradually come to believe she can manage her own life because she is proving it to herself.

SITUATIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR ROLE-PLAYING

These situations are offered as suggestions for the following purposes:

1. Role-playing in group training of aides.

   As you know, role-playing is most successful in generating ideas when answers are tentative, that is, when different ways of handling similar situations are dramatized. Done in this manner, role-playing leads to productive discussion of alternatives and promotes thoughtful participation.

2. Group discussion during training.

3. Handouts to aides. (It may be better to omit the suggestions for role-playing when the pieces are used as handouts.)

4. Illustrations of reports. The situations, except 1 and 7, might be used in discussing what should go into a report. Aides could be asked:

   a. Does the report tell anything about the homemaker's problems, her feelings, and her behavior?

   b. Is the purpose of the aide clearly described?

   c. Does the report tell enough about what the aide did and why she did it?

   d. Are any results of the aide's visit indicated?

Possibly, you will think of other uses for the situations. You may want to refer to your own aides' reports for examples that are "closer to home."

Situation 1

Mrs. Green has worked with Mrs. A. in weekly visits for about six months. On one visit Mrs. A. said she would like Mrs. Green to go shopping with her and the children for some clothes for herself and the family. Mrs. Green told Mrs. A. that she was going into town next Friday morning and would be glad to have Mrs. A. and the children go along with her. Mrs. A. said she would be ready. Mrs. Green talked with Mrs. A. about how she and the children should look in order to be comfortable and at ease.

Friday morning Mrs. Green arrived and discovered that Mrs. A. had made no preparation of herself or the children, even though she fully expected to go. She was untidy, dressed in an unclean outfit, and not as well groomed as Mrs. Green knew she could be. The children looked no better.

Mrs. Green was terribly disappointed and did not know what to do.

Questions to Think About

1. What should Mrs. Green do?

   Refuse to go?

   Go anyway?

   Help Mrs. A. get ready and then go?

2. How would Mrs. Green and Mrs. A. feel?

   If they didn't go?

   If they went anyhow?

   If Mrs. Green helped Mrs. A. get ready?

3. Why do you suppose Mrs. A. had not made the needed preparations?

4. What feelings other than disappointment might Mrs. Green have had when she saw the family?

5. After you have worked with a homemaker for quite a long time, and have become her friend, how can you let her know that you expect her to do certain things and keep to certain standards without running the danger of spoiling the good feeling?

6. How could Mrs. Green deal with her feeling that Mrs. A. had let her down? Or that she (Mrs. Green) had failed?

Situation 2

An aide reported one visit as follows:

"Today I went to visit Mrs. B. for the second time. She was out working in the yard, but she came in when she saw me. I asked her how she had been, and she said alright. She is a widow with four children in school and she is getting social security benefits. She started telling me that her oldest boy had gotten in some kind of trouble and she had received a letter telling her to report with the boy to some judge that afternoon. She was waiting for him to come home from school, so she could take him. I didn't get a chance to talk to her about our program, except to mention the menu and food list, but she was more interested in her own problems than in listening to me, so I left, and said I would come back some other time."

Questions to Think About

1. What do you think of the way the aide handled this situation?
2. How do you feel about the part where the aide says, "but she was more interested in her own problems than in listening to me, so I left, and said I would come back some other time."

Suggestions for Role-Playing

1. Ask aides to take the roles of the aide and Mrs. B. and act out different ways to bring this visit to a close.
2. Following each presentation, discuss with the aides the strong points that were brought out.

Situation 3

An aide reports:

"On February 26 I visited Mrs. C. She has five children, three in school and two at home. They own their house, have three rooms. They are not using the food stamps because they don't get enough money to buy them. Her husband is unemployed and getting unemployment benefits. She said her children did not like powdered milk. I tried to explain what the program was about and what I had learned during my training, but she didn't sound very interested. When I started to ask questions for the family record she said she did not want to participate and not to bother to come back unless it was a social visit."

Questions to Think About

1. Why do you think Mrs. C. said she did not want to participate?
2. Was it wise for the aide to start asking questions for the family record? What else could the aide have done?

Suggestions for role-playing

1. Ask aides to act out this situation as the aide reported it. Discuss the above questions.
2. Repeat the role-playing, but this time have the aide act differently.
3. Discuss how Mrs. C. would possibly react to the different approach.

Situation 4

From an aide's log:

"Mrs. D., 4 children, husband employed recently, home under construction.

"She said she was waiting for me. Two Headstart children were home ill. (cough and cold) Family catch colds easily. Presented a good lesson on nutrition -- our children need extra Vitamin C to help us keep healthy and stay away from colds. She asked several questions such as: why is it my children do not like milk, etc. We went over the lesson and then I demonstrated BANANA MILK DRINK. She mashed the bananas. I got milk ready--children watched with curiosity. Gerald, 3 years, colored an orange on paper I gave to him.

"She served milk and Barbara did not want to try it until she saw all of the others drinking and she soon got her glass--drank it all. They liked every bit of it. It seems she needs help on measurements. She wants help on cutting a jumper for Valerie. I told her I would have a sewing demonstration later and I would inform her where and when--she consented. She's interested in nutrition, sewing, marketing and home ideas. Would like to have me come any day at any time.

"Told her I would not be back following week but that I would see her week after next on Monday. Call her informing time I'd be there. Is very receptive. Her girls would like to meet at my place for sewing lessons at any time. The school has offered 1/2 day of Home Ec. so not every girl has the privilege to take Home Ec."

Questions to Think About

1. What do you think are the strong points in the way the aide teaches?

2. Is this a good log report? Why?

Situation 5

From an aide's report:

"Today I visited with Mrs. E. She asked me if I liked my job and she said she had heard that some of the girls had quit because they got involved with the homemakers by asking all these questions, and that they didn't like it. I told her we wrote informative logs on what we did for the day and who we worked with, but we did not refer to homemakers by name. Therefore, only we know who and what we spoke of. That was to let us remember things about the homemaker and her situation and to let our employer know what we were doing.

"We also talked about Mrs. E.'s neighborhood and how she has gotten to like it very much. We talked about getting together with another friend or friends and having a group meeting. She didn't seem to be too interested as her apartment is very small. She says when you get four people into it, it seems to be overflowing. She also told me of her sister who will be moving to the vicinity in a few weeks."

Questions to Think About

1. What does this report tell you about how this aide works?
2. Why do you think Mrs. E. asked the aide if she liked her job? What do you think of the aide's answer? Why?
3. Should the aide have pushed more for a group meeting? Why or why not?

Situation 6

From an aide's report:

> "I visited Mrs. F. She is a young girl of 16; she married five months ago. Her husband works at a store for $180 a month-started working two weeks ago. He is a high school graduate. She only got to the 10th grade.
>
> "She seems insecure and afraid to try any cooking or sewing. She said she'd tried sewing in school but the dress had been big enough for her mother so she'd given up trying. Also is afraid of cooking because she says she's afraid of trying out the foods then she'll get fat since her face is round to begin with.
>
> "She finally said she had a pair of pants her mother-in-law had gotten for her and they were big if I could fix them for her. I said I could help her. That way she could learn and later on we could try some cooking then sewing; in between she could learn to economize on food. She agreed but still seemed afraid to try. I said I'd stop by in two weeks and she agreed.
>
> "Her mother-in-law was there. She seemed to like the idea too and said I might also teach her to make baby clothes and teach her to eat the right kinds of foods for a pregnant mother but the girl says this isn't true. I didn't ask any questions. They seemed to get along very well."

Questions to Think About

1. Why do you think Mrs. F. finally mentioned the pair of pants? Was it something in the way the aide acted?
2. The aide writes, "I didn't ask any questions." Why do you think she decided not to?
3. Do you think the aide showed an interest in Mrs. F.? How?

Suggestion for Role-Playing

Ask aides to act out how the aide showed interest in Mrs. F.

Situation 7

Mrs. Jones is a middle aged Extension aide working with families in the housing project where she lives. She has visited many families in the project and has found that a lot of the young mothers are interested in sewing. Mrs. Jones asked about a dozen of the young homemakers whether they would like to have a meeting in the project's all-purpose room to talk about starting a sewing class. Ten young mothers said they would like to come.

Mrs. Jones made arrangements for the room. She informed the mothers by telephone or post card that the meeting would be at 10 a.m. a week from Tuesday, saying she hoped they all could come. A week from Tuesday came and only two mothers showed up. Mrs. Jones felt very bad about it and wondered what she had done wrong.

Questions to Think About

1. Did Mrs. Jones do anything "wrong," or did she simply forget some important things?
2. What else should Mrs. Jones have done that she didn't do?
3. Are there some homemakers who say they will come to a meeting and then don't show up because they feel "they don't really want me?" How do people get this feeling? Are there ways aides can help them overcome their feeling?
4. What practical things does an aide have to think about in planning a meeting?
   - care of children?
   - how people feel about their clothes?
   - which people are neighborly?
   - a definite and interesting topic or purpose?
   - what other things?

(You may want to reproduce these two pages to give your aides.)

HOW ARE YOU DOING?

-- A Checklist for Aides

The following checklist is for you to keep. Nobody else will see your answers, not even your supervising agent, unless you want her to. You do not have to mark your answers on the test if you would rather not. Just take it home and think about it.

The checklist only reminds you of some things to be careful about. You might want to carry it with you in your purse and look it over before you visit a family. Then you can look at it again after your visit to check on how you did. Or you could put it up someplace where you will see it often - like over your kitchen sink, or on a mirror in your bedroom.

Honest people would probably have to mark, "Sometimes" for most of the questions on the test. After all, nobody is perfect! We can all improve. People will usually learn more eagerly and easily from you when you have trusting and friendly dealings with them. Not only that, but your work will be more satisfying to yourself.

Your supervising agent might talk with you about the questions, either personally or in a group discussion with other aides. You might like talking together about why the questions are important. You may also think of more questions.

This list should not make you feel you are not doing a good job. It is only a reminder of some things you can keep working on so you will be an even better teacher and helper.

Do You Ever Make These Mistakes In Working With Families?

(Check one) Never	Some-times	
		Do you forget to greet family members, especially the mother, by name?
		Do you overlook chances to praise the mother for things that show effort, imagination, color, creativity, pride?
		Are you "pushy?"
		Do you talk so much that you can't listen?
		Do you make judgments before you understand all the facts?
		Are you impatient with people who learn slowly?
		Do you forget to see and praise the mother's effort, even though she is slow to learn, or makes mistakes?
		Do you criticize people who don't do things the way you think they should?
		Do you show feelings of shock or disgust when conditions in a home look terribly dirty or messy?
		Do you forget to keep your promises?
		Do you put on airs?
		Do you talk down to people?
		Do you gossip about the families you work with?
		Do you try to solve all the family's problems for them?
		Do you do things for mothers that they could do for themselves?
		Do people "shake you up" because you don't understand them?
		Do you interfere with the mother's discipline of her children?
		Are you too proud to admit making a mistake or to say, "I'm sorry?"
		Do you show sympathy for the family without also giving words of encouragement?
		Do you neglect chances to refer the family to other places where they can get help?
		Do you forget to close each visit with a sincere, warm, and encouraging compliment?

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